

REPORT

OF THE

SCHOOL VISITOR

FOR THE COUNTIES

OF

BELLECHASSE, ILET, KAMOURASKA

AND

RIMOUSKI.



To the Honorable the House of Assembly of Lower Canada in Parliament assembled.

REPORT,

OF THE SCHOOL VISITOR appointed by His Excellency the Governor in Chief, for the Counties of BELLECHASSE, ISLET, KAMOURASKA and RIMOUSKI.

Parts visited :—

This Visit was commenced at Beaumont on the 7th of July last, and ended at the new Parish of Ste. Luce, about two hundred miles below Quebec, on the 3rd of August, with the exception of three Schools in the Parish of Point Levi, which were visited on the 20th of August.

Number of Scholars and Schools :—

The whole number of Parishes visited was twenty nine, three of which are new Parishes lately established under the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, and have as yet no School; of the whole :

	Scholars.	Average of each School.
1 Parish has 19 Schools, and	519	27
1 Parish has 13 Schools,	497	38
2 Parishes have 10 Schools, each	679	34
2 Parishes have 8 Schools, each	621	38
2 Parishes have 7 Schools, each	467	35
1 Parish has 6 Schools, and	200	33
2 Parishes have 5 Schools, each	472	47
5 Parishes have 4 Schools, each	847	42
4 Parishes have 3 Schools, each	428	35
1 Parish has 2 Schools,	56	28
5 Parishes have only one School each,	176	35
3 Parishes have no Schools,	0	0

Total number of Scholar present at the visit, 4962

Usual number said to be in regular attendance at least eight months in the year, 4456

Of those present are Boys, 2593

Ditto ditto Girls, 2432

Boys paying from 5d. to 7s. 6d. per month, 566

Girls ditto, ditto, 490

Total paying, 1056

Gratuitous, 3922

Total, 4978

Schools in which only Boys are admitted, 23

Ditto in which only Girls are admitted, 24

Schools in which both Boys and Girls are admitted, 89

Schools in which a separate School for Boys and Girls are held in the same House and frequently in the same apartment with a Male and Female Teacher, each receiving the Government Allowance, 11

Schools under Trustees elected by the Inhabitants of each Parish, 112

Schools

Schools belonging to Fabriques, some of which are also under Trustees,	12
Ditto Royal Institution,	1
Ditto Proprietors' Schools established before 1829.	7
Male Teachers,	84
Female Teachers,	55
Schools not receiving the Government Allowance,	1

Progress of Scholars.—

The progress of the Scholars is generally good, their capacity and behaviour excellent. Several instances occurred where children from four to eight years of age who had been only about eight months or a year at School, read fluently, wrote a fair hand, and knew the four first Rules of Arithmetic. Some persons upwards of twenty years of age were found at School, one of whom had learned to read and write, and cypher in three months.

The Visitor found one or more good Teachers in each Parish where Schools are established. The majority of them are qualified to teach Reading, Writing and the first Rules of Arithmetic, in the language of the majority of the Inhabitants. In some Schools English was taught by Native Canadians, and the progress of the children, considering that they do not understand that language and have no opportunity of hearing it spoken, was admirable.

Teachers:—

The character and conduct of most of the Masters and Mistresses were found to be exemplary. The degree of instruction possessed by many of them was small; still from their habits of order, regularity, great attention and able management of the children, the Scholars were making good progress. This was peculiarly discernable in the female Teachers, who seem to have greater ability in managing youth of a suitable age for Elementary Education, to wit: from four to eight, or nine years old. Many of the female Teachers besides, have had the benefit directly or indirectly of the excellent system of Female Education which has long prevailed in the Ursulines' Nunneries, and in the Schools of the Ladies of the Congregation of *Notre-Dame*, at Montreal, who have Branches of their Establishment, in several of the most populous parts throughout the Province.

Considering the general good conduct of the Teachers, and the progress which the Scholars are making, the Visitor has to recommend the suspension or discontinuance of but a small proportion of Teachers. Some of them because they were too near to other Schools with Teachers better qualified, and others for irregularities. Of the latter, most of them are persons who do not belong to the parts of the country where they keep School, and are consequently without that powerful controul which is exercised by the relations, and the public opinion of the place in maintaining a good character.

Recommended to be suspended or discontinued:—

The whole number recommended to be suspended unless favorable report from the Trustees,

Suspended after the 15th of August and 15th September,	5
Suspended after the 15th of November,	2
	21

Several Teachers, where more than one lives in the same District, will have to remove to other Districts; and the Visitor has thought it prudent where there was no particular ground for preference to leave the decision as to which of them should remove, to the Trustees.

The

The total number of Teachers is		138
The total number of Districts is		141
being distributed as follows in the several Parishes, viz :		
	School Districts :	
Bellechasse County.—In Point Levi Parish,		
	Beaumont,	3
	St. Michel,	6
	St. Charles,	7
	St. Gervais,	10
	St. Vallier,	10
	Berthier,	8
	St. François,	1
	St. Pierre,	4
L'Islet County.—St. Thomas,		2
	Cap St. Ignace,	3
	L'Islet,	5
	St. Jean,	5
	St. Roch,	6
Kamouraska County.—Ste. Anne,		4
	Rivière Ouëlle,	4
	Kamouraska,	13
	St. Paschal,	7
	St. André,	5
Rimouski County.—Rivière du Loup,		10
	Cacouna,	3
	L'Île Verte,	5
	Trois Pistoies,	4
	St. Simon,	1
	St. Fabien,	0
	Bic,	0
	Rimouski,	4
	Ste. Luce,	1
	Mitis,	1
The excess of Districts beyond the number of Masters and		4
Mistresses found in the Schools visited, is		

Abuses :—

It seemed to the Visitor that in some instances a spirit of patronage, the procuring of a small allowance of from twenty to fifty pounds a year for a relation, a dependant or a *protégé*, rather than a consideration of the services which the persons patronised could render to the cause of Education, has prevailed. By getting a separate government allowance for a husband and wife, brother and sister in the same house, this patronage has been made to amount to from forty to seventy pounds of the public money a year, for the same family, with lodging, fuel, &c. which is a greater annual income than is enjoyed by most of the farming proprietors in the country Parishes.

This evil was the natural result of the interpretation which was given to the Act of 1829; that there was no limit to the number of Schools that might be established in the same Parish, Seignior, &c., and that every Scholar that was taught gratuitously, even of the number of twenty in consideration of which the allowance of £20 per annum is made, was to be paid for by the Government at 10s. per annum.

The consequences of the spirit of patronage and those constructions of the Act, have been the extraordinary number of Schools established in some parishes, and an absolute recruiting for Scholars, dividing existing Schools with upwards of forty Scholars, and putting upon the lists persons who may occasionally attend

attend, but who are evidently not Scholars. This practice on the part of the teachers, again led the parents of the children to under-value Education, or to consider it at least as more for the interest of the teachers and the government than their own, and that of their off-pring, the daily experience of such parents not warranting them in concluding that so much trouble was taken and money spent merely for the good of others. Children were suffered to go to School to oblige the Master or his Patrons. In such a state of things, the Master lost that controul over his Scholars which is indispensable for their instruction. Every exercise of authority, however gentle, in no case extending to corporal inflictions, was met by a threat of taking the child from School, and some Schools have been broken up, on no better ground, by the influence of persons offended at the exercise of a necessary controul. The absence of the Scholars, excepting perhaps on examination days, was quite common, without previous notice, or speedy subsequent information forwarded to the Master, and the wealthiest parents were not ashamed to find their children on the returns sent into Government as paupers. Indeed many of them naturally concluded, that since Government paid at least for twenty of them, six dollars a year, the Master was already sufficiently paid, without getting any thing for a service which he had been so solicitous to perform.

That the Schools have been able to withstand such a state of things, and that the desire of Education should have gained ground amongst the people generally, has been, in a great degree, owing to the exhortations of the Clergy and other enlightened inhabitants of the Parishes, but peculiarly to the admirable spirit of the children, their gentle and docile character and their desire of learning. In every instance, they were found to be for the continuance of the Schools; many of them walk more than six miles a day to attend School, and their attention and aptitude is such, that under all disadvantages, their progress is more rapid than in the generality of Schools where the qualifications of the teachers and other circumstances, are far superior.

Remedies :—

Although there has been some difficulty in finding teachers, it is gradually disappearing. Schools established many years ago by the Curates and the Convents have furnished several persons well qualified for teaching Elementary Education to the extent that is required in the School Districts. Besides, the District Schools are already furnishing teachers for other School Districts. Where Education has been neglected, persons of learning, abilities and good conduct, find more lucrative employment, than can be afforded, for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic to children in a District of small extent : and the experience of all countries proves that unless Education is cheap at first, it never becomes general. As learning extends, Teachers of a higher qualification will be more valued and better paid. In the mean time, the Visitor can bear testimony, that the best conducted Schools and those where the Children made the most progress, were those kept by the teachers, natives of the Parishes where the School is situated or the adjoining Parishes. Schools conducted by females were decidedly the most orderly and generally making the greatest progress.

In the pursuance of the requirements of the Law, in view of cheapness to the Scholar and general facility for all children to attend School, all the Parishes visited have been divided into School Districts founded on the distance and present location of the population, as will be seen by the general return hereunto annexed. Each District will furnish a hundred or more Scholars having from a few arpents to about two leagues to travel daily to School, a distance which it is found many of the children now travel without complaining. If a greater distance exists in any District it is but rare, and

and rendered necessary by the thinness of the population; as the number of Scholars increase the Teachers will improve in the management of a School and their remuneration will also increase. One teacher may easily manage an Elementary School of one hundred and upwards, when he has a number of Scholars who have already made some progress and are able to assist him in the teaching by classes. Such assistance is generally given by the best Scholars, and it is well known that the teachers of classes, by aiding in the teaching of those of their own class make greater progress than if they were not so employed. Besides it is not unusual for teachers to exempt such Scholars from any payment, or bestow on them some other encouragement.

From the experience the Visitor has had during his visit, he is persuaded that the whole of the Elementary Instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic necessary for the mass of the people consisting of Agriculturalists and Tradesmen, may be acquired before the children attain their ninth year, previous to which, say from four years old to eight their presence at home throughout the day, rather impedes than promotes the industry of the families to which they belong. After that age those of the children who shew great capacity or whose parents have the means and inclination, would be ready to enter a superior School to prepare for branches of industry requiring a greater degree of learning or for entering Colleges to qualify for the learned professions. In each of the Stages of Education above mentioned, the progress of the Scholar and the labours of the teacher would be greatly facilitated by the latter not having to bestow part of his time in bringing the Scholar forward to enter upon the branches he is to study.

The Visitor has seen inconvenience in Scholars much above ten years old attending the Elementary Schools with the great mass of Scholars under that age, and is of opinion that they ought to be taught separately in extra hours.

The number of separate Schools for males is twenty three, for females thirty four. The Schools where both Boys and Girls are admitted are eighty nine. It is obvious that if any allowance in aid of Education is made by Government, it must be equal to each School District. It should be optional with the Inhabitants to divide it between a School for Boys and another for Girls, or allow it altogether for a mixed School for Girls and Boys. If the Scholars admitted within the School hours in the Elementary Schools were limited to be under ten years of age, female teachers would generally be found the best, as understanding much better than males the management of both Boys and Girls under that age.

School Hours and Regulations:—

The Visitor found very little regularity in the School Hours established throughout the extent of his visit, and very few written Regulations for the management of the Schools established by the Trustees. It was particularly recommended to the Teachers to be punctual themselves as to the hours fixed, and to require punctuality on the part of the Scholars on pain of expulsion, after several notices to the parents. It was also recommended under the same penalty and formalities, to exact previous notice of all intended absences, or the transmission of notice by the parents to the Master as soon after as practicable, and that the Teacher, on such notices not being given, should notify the parents of the absence of the Scholar as speedily as possible; these precautions being absolutely necessary, that the child may not be exposed to the temptation of lying to the Master or their parents in cases of unauthorized absence. It was also particularly enjoined on the Teachers to give regular public notice of the entry of the School by ringing a Bell or otherwise. The School Hours the most generally prevalent, are from nine in the morning till noon, and from two to five, which is probably sufficient.

In many Schools there is a mischievous neglect of not teaching by Classes, and in some instances there is a deficiency of Books necessary for that purpose, which however is in the course of removal.

Complaints:—

But few complaints were made to the Visitor on the subject of Schools. In some cases, the Inhabitants of distant parts of Parishes complained that they were neglected by the Trustees elected for the whole Parish, by the parts where the population was the most dense, they forming the majority. The Visitor is of opinion that each School District should have the election of its own Trustees and the property and management of its own School, subject to the visit of some persons resident in the Parish and County authorized by Law. In some instances there were complaints of want of qualification and irregularity of Teachers, which have been attended to in most cases, as will be found by the Return. In some instances complaints were made that the old Trustees had not delivered over the Accounts and Papers to their successors; but this the Visitor conceived to be of a nature to admit of an easy remedy at Law. Several payments up to the 15th May last, had not been made at the end of July; but this was purely accidental. Some diminutions on the claims of Trustees had also been made, which the Visitor has not been able to ascertain to have been improper.

The most serious complaints were in respect of the insufficiency of the extent of the lots on which some School Houses are erected, and for which Government has paid a moiety. It appeared to the Visitor that they were insufficient, and in some instances, the whole property is hardly worth the money paid by the Government. The extent of the ground and the size of the Buildings are generally noted in the Return. The Visitor particularly refers to the Conditions of some Deeds concerning School Houses, paid for, as the Visitor conceives, about their full worth out of the Public money, in the Parish of St. Gervais. Those Deeds are annexed, marked A. B. C., and the Visitor humbly recommends that legal measures may be taken to secure the interest of the Public and prevent the recurrence of similar transactions in future.

The Visitor also refers to a complaint mentioned in the Return for St. Louis de Kamouraska, where two families were lodged in a School House partly paid by Government, clearly to the annoyance of the School and dissatisfaction of one at least of the parents of the children. The Visitor, however, has reason to hope that his recommendation to the Trustees has been complied with.

Assistance to Visitor:—

The Visitor cannot conclude this Report without noticing the ready co-operation of the Members of the House of Assembly and other Gentlemen who were appointed by Law to accompany him as Visitors; particularly the Curates of the different Parishes, Justices of the Peace, Senior Officers of Militia, School Trustees and other Inhabitants of parts visited, most of whom seemed anxious to forward the cause of the general Education of the People, and the views of the Legislature.

The task of the School Trustees has been peculiarly onerous and liable to great difficulties, particularly where local feuds and discords unfortunately exist. Their conduct with a few exceptions seems to have been influenced by the only legitimate motive for accepting the trust, a desire to promote Education and local and general prosperity. The School Masters and Mistresses have also had many difficulties and humiliations to contend with: They are already a numerous and most useful Body of persons, and it will doubtless be the

the object of each of them, by his own good conduct, to raise the character of the profession; and all those who have any influence in the matter, will doubtless be anxious to aid in rendering them respectable and comfortable as they justly ought to be, seeing their importance as connected with the rising generation, on whom most essentially depends the future prosperity and happiness of the Country.

All which is humbly submitted,

Quebec, 31st August, 1831.

J. NEILSON,

Visitor.